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Birth Father

Wilda Morris

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Birth Father

Abandoned at a young age, my birth father
was angry. Handsome. Seductive. Alcoholic.
An abusive husband. His departure was a good loss.
A cleansing, a wake-up call that sent him spinning,
divorce decree in hand. A relief to Mother
who learned again to breathe, smile, sing.
An opening for an eventual second marriage,
giving Sis and me a new dad's gentle strength
and patient love, a model we needed
before we sought life partners.

I found my birth father again years later—
on the Social Security Death Register.
The Internet led me to half-brothers
and their children who brought him to life.
Redeemed. Reformed. A hard-working family man
who never raised a hand against his children?
Spent hours volunteering at the food pantry,
risked hiring men who struggled with addiction.
Penance, perhaps, for the sins of his youth.
Half-brothers told me he never forgot
his two daughters living somewhere in Iowa,
sisters they would likely never meet.

-Wilda Morris

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Francis Keller
Photography